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# New Research: Filtering And Blocking Software Reduces Exposure Of Youth To Unwanted Explicit Content Online

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## New Research: Filtering And Blocking Software Reduces Exposure Of Youth To Unwanted Explicit Content Online

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Crimes against Children Research Center

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**Editors and Reporters: For a copy of the journal article, contact Lori Wright at [lori.wright@unh.edu](mailto:lori.wright@unh.edu).**

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DURHAM, N.H. –The use of filtering and blocking software reduces exposure to unwanted sexual material among youth, according to new research from the University of New Hampshire Crimes against Children Research Center.

"The software looks to be helpful. But even for those with the software, the exposure rate is far from zero. That means we still have to find other ways to prevent unwanted exposure. There's no silver bullet. Any effective strategy is going to need to use multiple approaches," said David Finkelhor, director of the UNH Crimes against Children Research Center.

The research is presented in the current issue of the journal *Child Abuse and Neglect* in the article "Associations between blocking, monitoring, and filtering software on the home computer and youth-reported unwanted exposure to sexual material online."

Researchers conducted a national survey of 800 households with home Internet access about their Internet prevention activities in the household and adolescent behaviors and exposures online.

According to the researchers, unwanted exposure to sexual material occurred in 32 percent of youth in homes with pop-up/spam blockers and 25 percent of youth in homes with filtering, blocking, or monitoring software on the home computer, compared to 43 percent of households without preventive software installed on the home computer.

In comparison to youth using home computers without preventative software, youth using home computers with pop-up/spam blockers were 59 percent less likely to report unwanted exposure to sexual material on the home computer. Those using home computers with filtering, blocking, or monitoring software were 65 percent less like to report exposure to sexual material.

In particular, the preventative software significantly reduced risk of unwanted exposure for youth ages 10 to 15 years old. This is the less experienced end of the youth spectrum, which may most need external filters to help them.

The researchers recommend parents and caregivers of boys and girls ages 15 years old and younger who want to reduce the likelihood of unwanted exposure to sexual material on the home computer should consider including preventive software — especially filtering, blocking, or monitoring software — in their Internet safety plan.

The UNH Crimes against Children Research Center (CCRC) works to combat crimes against children by providing high-quality research and statistics to the public, policy makers, law enforcement personnel, and other child welfare practitioners. CCRC is concerned with research about the nature of crimes including child abduction, homicide, rape, assault, and physical and sexual abuse as well as their impact. Visit the center online at <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/index.html>.

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**PHOTO**

David Finkelhor, director of the UNH Crimes against Children Research Center  
<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/finkelhor.jpg>

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